

Extracts from the CIA Publication,
"A Synthesis of 'The Vietnam Situation: An Analysis and Estimate'"
dated 23 May 1967

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Section II. Paras. B.5, B.6, B.7, and B.8. Pages 2 and 3:

5. Estimating the size, structure and effectiveness of the enemy force in South Vietnam is a difficult intelligence task complicated by methodological problems. It is difficult to acquire hard data in a timely fashion. Also, when new kinds of data information become available, it is difficult to relate the new data to the previous figures based on a different breakdown of data. There is, for example, the inevitable tension between the need to apply stringent criteria of confirmation and acceptability (which tend to produce inherently low "assessments," as do the assessments for real estate taxation) with the need for appraisals (like those a real estate salesman makes) which indicate what allied forces actually may be facing. Over the past year, our methodology and data base have improved markedly. Further refinement is still possible but some problems, particularly acquisition problems involving timeliness, are inherently insoluble [REDACTED]

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6. The Communists have continued to expand their main force units, despite the increasing effectiveness of allied "search-and-destroy" operations. Viet Cong-North Vietnam main forces have expanded by 36 percent in the period since January 1966 -- from 85,000 to 115,000. The present level may be even higher, since all the evidence on recent infiltrations and recruitment is not yet in.

7. Part of this expansion of main force units has been at the expense of lower level Viet Cong formations. To accelerate the expansion, a number of guerrilla elements were upgraded, causing a drain on Viet Cong paramilitary formations and on the so-called "political infrastructure." These forces remain sizeable, however, -- probably larger in fact than current order of battle figures indicate. It is difficult to compute the full strength of the paramilitary, combat support and political elements with any real precision. Latest order of battle holdings peg the irregular forces at 113,000, but recent studies indicate that the total may well be close to 200,000. The strength of the support forces, now carried at 25,000, may be several times greater. In short, the overall strength of the insurgent apparatus in South Vietnam, currently listed as 292,000, may be in the half-million range.

8. This is not to suggest that the total Communist force structure has increased dramatically in recent months. Instead, an accumulation of improvements in methodology and data now indicates that the allies have long been facing a total organized opposition far larger than accepted [REDACTED]

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official figures have indicated. An appreciation of the probable true size of this organized opposition will make possible far more valid and useful interpretations of future input and loss statistics.